



EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

Disasters (both natural and technologic) and terrorism can have significant public health implications. An explosion, hurricane, flood, or radiation release can quickly threaten the health of thousands of people and overwhelm a community's capacity to respond.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

In most places, state and local public health agencies are responsible for health issues before, during, and after a disaster. CDC developed [emergency response capabilities](#) to assist state and local health departments and other nations in addressing public health issues. Additional substantial funding was received in 2002 as a result of an emergency supplemental appropriation to augment state and local planning and preparedness efforts; this money will be used for preparedness planning and response for all 50 states, three cities, the District of Columbia, and U.S. Territories.

Through its 24-hour emergency contact system and emergency operations center, CDC provides immediate assistance to local, state, and federal agencies in planning their public health responses to emergency situations. CDC also collaborates with the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance to assist in international emergency response. Recent program activities include the following:

- In collaboration with local and state health departments, CDC led the public health emergency response effort after the September 11th World Trade Center and Pentagon incidents.
- CDC provided emergency public assistance to Texas and Louisiana in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Allison in 2001.
- In response to severe flooding, CDC assisted the City of Houston Health Department and the Harris County Health Department in vectorborne disease control, worker health and safety, mold and mildew prevention, and injury/illness surveillance. Further, CDC assisted with rapid public health field assessment in accordance with the Health and Medical Services function of the [Federal Response Plan](#).
- CDC distributed planning guidance for state public health officials titled [The Public Health Response to Biological and Chemical Terrorism](#). This guidance is designed to assist state public health officials in determining the roles of their departments in response to biological and chemical terrorism. The guidance also describes the appropriate coordination efforts required among all the agencies and organizations to respond to a biological or chemical terrorism event.
- CDC participated on the U.S. National Regulatory Commission committee to update to [Federal Radiological Response Plan](#) created to integrate Federal responses to peacetime radiological emergencies.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

- Enhance CDC response systems and increase capacity for disaster response at state and local levels.
- Work with states to develop and test disaster- and terrorism-response plans at state and local levels.

For further information about this or other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/programs. February 2002